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## Notes and Opinions.

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**Jesus and the Organization of the Church.**—In *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift* of September Pastor Bernhard Rische discusses the “Foundation Principles for the Constitution of the Church according to the New Testament.” While his study has especial reference to Lutheranism, he has treated the matter so independently and in such a historical spirit as to make his conclusions worthy of careful consideration. This is especially true, perhaps, of his views as to the teaching of Jesus. Distinguishing between the kingdom of God as “the community of life bound up through faith and love, with and in Jesus,” and the church as the visible form of that kingdom upon the earth, he holds that Jesus established no offices or ranks, and that, therefore, neither the office of the preacher nor preachers themselves as a class were historically established by Jesus, although the existence of the latter is doubtless according to his will. Such a position is opposed to the view that the office of preachers is an outgrowth of the apostolate. Such a position, Rische holds, would establish a new law and justify the episcopacy of the Roman church—the latter an argument that accords ill with a purely historical method. The apostolate was by the intention of Jesus to have no successors. Nor did he intend that something answering to the apostolate should exist in the church. The preaching office was shared by all. The sending of the Seventy for the foundation of the sacraments did not establish an order in the church. In the same way the office of administration of the church is not from Jesus. Even in Matt. 18:17 the reference to the “church” is not to any organization or office, but to a body of believers no more official than the “one or two” of the context. The real power of punishment lies in the hands of the one Master. Yet in all these particulars, Rische holds, there lay general principles that might very easily be worked out into formal organization of the apostolic church—of necessity and legitimately, but not finally. They must cease when the circumstances which necessitated them cease.

This appreciation of the foresight of Jesus is a proper foundation on which to build an ecclesiastical polity. It throws the question where it properly belongs—into the apostolic age, and there it is that any

Christian can find more or less justification for that form of church organization which seems to him best adapted to express the religious aspect of the kingdom Jesus founded. Thus the question becomes at once historical and practical.

In this connection it may not be without service to mention a recent treatise on *The New Testament Church* by Rev. W. H. H. Marsh, in which the whole matter is discussed from a new point of view and in an able manner.

**The Climate of Palestine.**—In the September number of *Études*, published by the Fathers of the Company of Jesus in Jerusalem, H. Lammens, S.J., gives a great amount of information as regards the climate of Syria, and especially of Palestine. His conclusion is particularly interesting as regards the question as to whether or not the climate has changed since the time when the country was much more densely inhabited than today. According to M. Lammens the diminution in the fertility of the region is due to the neglect of cultivation, the decrease in the population, and to administration. It is man, not nature, he maintains, who has ruined the country, and it is, therefore, human energy that can, when it wills, bring it back to its former prosperity. Such a conclusion is especially striking in view of the current belief that the great difficulty with the country lies in the destruction of the forests and in the diminution of the rainfall. M. Lammens holds that in olden times, as today, the water supply was insufficient unless it were reinforced by cisterns and by aqueducts. The facts which he has brought together in this article make his opinion exceedingly probable, and confirm the conclusions to be drawn from results of the Jewish colonies in the Jordan valley.

**The Bible and Soldiers on the Field.**—The wonderful wealth of the Scriptures in texts applicable to all phases of life has a striking illustration in the recent volume of Dr. H. Clay Trumbull, *War Memories of a Chaplain*. The texts used by him on the field are singularly appropriate, and in almost no case approach "accommodation." Thus Dr. Trumbull preached on Thanksgiving spent at the front from Ps. 23 : 5, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies ;" during a time of disaster, from Ps. 60 : 12, "Through God we shall do valiantly ; for he it is that shall tread down our enemies ;" in which he gave a careful interpretation of the psalm's title ; in a time of discontent and complaint, from Num. 32 : 6, "Shall your brethren go to

war, and shall ye sit here ? ” in which more than a third of the sermon (which was printed by request of the regiment’s colonel for distribution) was simply explanatory of the text and its surroundings. Such homiletical insight as these sermons indicate is in a large way open to any man who is truly a student of the Bible. How vastly superior and effective is such a genuinely scholarly method to the cheap sensationalism that chooses texts as mottoes and trusts to novelty rather than truth !

**Isaiah and Jesus.**—An otherwise carefully written Sunday-school lesson quarterly explains Isaiah’s prophecies by the statement that it was necessary for the people of his day “ to know about Jesus. ” Such a statement is an illustration of either carelessness or ignorance. Either is deplorable in a publication intended for the instruction of those who are to teach Sunday schools.